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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: AFGHANISTAN, MISSILE DEFENSE, IRAN,
CLIMATE; Berlin

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- [1](#). Lead Stories

Primetime newscasts and most newspapers opened with the closure of the mail-order business Quelle. Some papers focused on the Constitutional Court's review of the labor market reform. Frankfurter Allgemeine opened with the Afghan runoff elections and Sueddeutsche led with a

story on the new government's planned 'shadow budget.' Editorials focused on Quelle, the labor market reform known as Hartz IV, the coalition talks, and Afghanistan.

- [2](#). Afghan Runoff Elections

Frankfurter Allgemeine editorialized: "Karzai has lost face before his supporters and legitimacy among the international community since election fraud could hardly have happened without his knowledge. A

second round of elections, which he will probably win, will not remove this stain. It is expected that the logistical efforts to hold the runoff will be made more difficult by an increase in attacks by the Taliban. Voters must fear for their lives. If the turnout is lower than a third of all voters, which was achieved in the first round, the results of the runoff will be dubious anyway."

Sueddeutsche remarked: "When have we done enough for Afghanistan? When can the 67,000 soldiers leave the country? Karzai has given an

important answer to these questions with his agreement to hold runoff elections. If the runoff is successful, the next government will enjoy a great deal of legitimacy. If Karzai appoints reasonable ministers and does not give in to his clientele, we could hand over more and more responsibility to his government. After their energy was absorbed in recent months by supporting the elections, the American, German, and other governments no longer have any excuses... The runoff offers them a last opportunity to keep their promises: protection against the Taliban and a better life. This is also one last chance to define achievable and credible goals for the mission:

Afghanistan must be able to protect itself against becoming an Islamic caliphate.... The positive power of the runoff can be exploited as one last impetus to stabilize the country... This will be the last chance. Karzai has tested the limits of our goodwill."

Frankfurter Rundschau opined: "Hamid Karzai gave in to the complaints commission and the important visitors from the West. Particularly

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Zalmay Khalilzad, who pulled the strings before Karzai's first inauguration, did a lot of pep talk. The neocon, who was in charge of everything in the broader Middle East under President Bush, might have helped Karzai out of his fix for the time being. However, Karzai will continue to carry the stain of having benefited from massive election fraud. This is a burden for Afghanistan's future, regardless of how the runoff will end."

Under the headline "Afghanistan is not yet lost-the path to democracy," Die Welt commented: "On the path to democracy, elections

are an important step towards peace, if they are credible, and instability if they are not credible. This is the fate Afghanistan

faces now, as if it has not yet suffered enough. Runoff elections are necessary, but are not sufficient to create confidence at home and abroad.... To what extent is fraud acceptable in consideration of our fallen soldiers? The West must ask itself whether the goals of the mission are still reasonable and achievable. The notion of democracy

present in Petersberg in 2001 has not yet been established and is not in sight.... It is becoming clear that a runoff is the West's wonder cure but not the way to pacify the country, which has different traditions.... Afghanistan is not yet lost. The runoff elections will again require more security measures... The efforts of Afghans and the international community must not be in vain. Afghanistan must not again turn into Bin Laden's country."

Tagesspiegel editorialized: "Election fraud is not always rewarded by power sharing deals, like in Africa. With the decision to hold runoff

elections between Karzai and Abdullah, the election scandal is supposed to be cured. However, the runoff will not create more credibility as it must be prepared in less than three weeks. Many Afghans were not able to participate in the first round of the elections because of the security situation. It is an illusion that election fraud will be avoidable in the runoff. It will probably be even more professionally done. Fairly acceptable runoff elections are important for the West not to lose face. Without Karzai's agreement, the debate over a new U.S. strategy on Afghanistan and deploying more soldiers would have come to a sudden end. Also in Germany and other NATO countries, it would have been difficult to secure more development aid and soldiers to monitor election fraudsters."

13. VP Biden in Czech Republic and Poland, Missile Defense Policy Shift

Under the headline "In a strategic mission," Frankfurter Rundschau reported that "U.S. Vice President Biden must calm down Poles and

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Czechs who were recently snubbed. This will not be a pleasant trip for him. Barack Obama's deputy is supposed to repair the damage the U.S. President has caused.... The faithful allies were particularly annoyed about the way they were treated by Washington. Obama informed them by telephone at midnight European time about the change of course. The fact that Obama called them on the day the Russians invaded Poland was bitterly commented upon in Warsaw."

Sueddeutsche headlined: "Biden is supposed to calm down Eastern Europeans," and notes that "the U.S. wants to guarantee Poland's and the Czech Republic's security via a new defense plan." The paper shows a photo of Biden with the caption saying: "VP Biden wants to make clear that good relations between America and Russia will not be a burden to Eastern Europe."

14. Iranian Nuclear Program

Several German papers carried reports on the negotiations on the Iranian nuclear program. Frankfurter Allgemeine headlines: "Mottaki excludes France." Sueddeutsche headlines: "Iran turns sideways in nuclear talks," adding that "Iran suddenly rejects the agreed supply of fuel rods from France." FT Deutschland headlines "Iran makes fools out of western negotiators," noting that "unimpressed by the nuclear talks in Vienna, Iran sticks to the enrichment of uranium.... By reaching out in Geneva, Iran has won more time in the nuclear dispute and avoided UN sanctions."

15. Climate Protection

Many German papers carried reports on the state of the climate talks, noting that the "Climate summit faces failure" (Berliner Zeitung headline) and that the issue of "Climate Protection divides the EU" (Sueddeutsche headline). Sueddeutsche noted: "Six weeks prior to the planned closure of the climate protection agreement, the EU is at odds over the European contribution to climate protection. After hours

of
debate, Europeans did not manage to achieve a common mandate for the
Copenhagen conference during their finance ministerial in
Luxemburg."
Handelsblatt remarked: "Germany blocks aid for poorer countries."

Under the headline "The climate must wait," Tagesspiegel reported
that
"prior to the world summit in Copenhagen, Europe and the U.S.
continue
to argue over specific goals. Only 46 days to go until the world
climate summit in Copenhagen, but it remains completely unclear what
the post-Kyoto protocol will look like. It is becoming increasingly
clear that Copenhagen will only be one important step in the fight
against climate change."

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Frankfurter Allgemeine expressed more optimism, noting that
"negotiations make progress," as "negotiators come closer to an
agreement on financial matters seven weeks prior to the global
climate
summit in Copenhagen. At the London forum of the G20 on energy and
climate issues, industrial and larger threshold countries have
agreed
that a considerable amount of public money is required to help
developing countries produce environment-friendly energy."

MURPHY